**SUNDAY 9/19/21**

**SERMON**

**MARK 9:** **30-37**

3-year old Jeremy went to the grocery with his mother.

Before entering the store, Mom reminded Jeremy:

“You are not going to get any chocolate chip cookies, so don't even ask!”

She put Jeremy in the child seat of the grocery cart.

 And there he sat while she wheeled up and down the aisles.

He was doing just fine until they came to the cookie section.

He saw the chocolate chip cookies, and stood up in the seat and said,

“Mommy, can I have some chocolate chip cookies?”

Mom said, "I told you not to ask.

 You are not getting any chocolate chip cookies."

Unhappy, he sat back down in his seat and they continued up and down the aisles.

But Mom remembered something she had forgotten in the baking section,

 and they ended up back in the cookie aisle.

Jeremy spied his favorite cookies and begged:

“Mommy, can I pretty please have some chocolate chip cookies?”

Mom said, "I told you no. You can't have any cookies.

 Now sit down and be quiet."

Finally, they were approaching the checkout lane.

Jeremy sensed that this might be his last chance.

So, just before they got in line,

 he stood up on the seat of the cart and shouted at the top of his lungs:

“Oh please, Jesus! May I please have some chocolate chip cookies?”

Everybody in the store heard him loud and clear, and started laughing.

Even Mom couldn't help but join in.

Due to the generosity of the other shoppers,

 Jeremy and his mother left with 23 boxes of chocolate chip cookies.

James taught: You do not have because you do not ask.

You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly.

Few of us would ask God to provide us with chocolate chip cookies.

But our loving heavenly Father listens to our pleas, and is willing to help us.

He doesn't always answer the way we wish,

 but He always listens, and He always cares.

He cares about the little things in our lives, and he cares about the big things.

He hears our doubts and our cries, our fears and concerns,

 our pain and grief.

When we don't take our problems to Him in prayer,

 we don't receive his comfort and help.

Bill was a young man who worked for a lawn maintenance company.

It was a good job and he enjoyed working outside.

But the owner, his boss, was getting older and decided to get out of the business.

And Bill found himself without a job.

He believed in God.

He trusted God to help him find a new job.

He prayed every day, asking God to find him work.

Several weeks passed, but nothing happened.

One day his friend Tim asked him:

“How is the job hunting going? Have you found any prospects?”

Bill answered, "I asked God to find me a new job.

 I know God loves me, and he cares about me.

 God will find me work soon."

Timmy was shocked. "But aren't you knocking on doors,

 and reading the help wanted ads?"

Bill shook his head. "God will find me a good job."

Tim was quiet for several long minutes and then said,

“I think God wants you to participate in the search, too.”

God does not do everything for us.

He helps, and guides, and leads us.

But he expects us to do whatever we can also.

God is not simply a servant who does everything for us.

Prayer is teamwork, and God wants us to be part of the solution.

He wants us to participate.

So often we do not have, because we do not ask.

We ask and do not receive, because we ask wrongly.

We humans can be so impatient.

We want what we want, and we want it right now.

God has bigger plans for us.

He loves us too much to always give us what we want.

He gives us what we need: His love, protection, and guidance.

Back in colonial times, preachers often traveled through the area,

 stopping and spending time in several small congregations.

Rowland Hill was a familiar preacher in those days.

One evening he had to stop at a village inn because of a fierce rain storm.

He would spend the night there,

 and hoped the weather would be better in the morning.

When it grew late, the landlord knocked on his door and asked:

 "Sir, will you be going to bed soon?

 I must see all the lanterns out before I retire because I am so afraid of fire." Rowland replied, "I also am concerned about fire.

 But I was hoping to have a brief prayer service before I sleep."

"All very good, Sir, but it has never been done here at the inn.

 I have no objection to having prayer, but I don't know how."

“Well," said Rowland, "It is not overly difficult. Gather the family, and servants, and any other guests who are here, and let us see what can be done.”

The landlord obeyed, and in a few minutes the astonished people were gathered. Rowland invited the landlord to pray,

“Sir," said the landlord, "I never prayed in my life. I don't know how.”

"Ask God to teach you," was the gentle reply.

With some trepidation, the landlord folded his hands, bowed his head, and said:

“God teach us how to pray.”

“That is prayer, my friend," exclaimed the Preacher joyfully. "Continue.”

“I am sure I don't know what to say now, Sir.”

“Yes, you do. God has taught you how to pray, now thank Him for it.”

The landlord folded his hands and bowed his head, and said:

“Thank you, God Almighty, for letting us talk to you.”

"Amen! Amen!" exclaimed Rowland Hill.

Two years later, Rowland again stopped at the same village inn.

He discovered that in addition to the inn, there was now also a chapel and a school,

 all because of that first prayer service at the Inn,

 when a humble landlord learned how easy it was to pray to God.

So often we do not have simply because we do not ask.

God never gets tired of listening to our awkward requests.

He hears our need for help in spite of our awkwardness.

When we come near to God, He will come near to us.

And what a great difference it makes in our lives.

When we respond to God's love and forgiveness,

 amazing things happen.

We are no longer driven by what we want,

 but are motivated by what God wants:

 Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

 Not my will, but Your will be done, Lord God.

A friend went to visit an elderly Scotch woman who lived alone.

“What do you do during the day when you are all alone?”

 the friend asked.

"Well," she said,

 "I get my hymnbook and sing.

 Then I read my Bible and let the Lord speak to me.

 When I get tired of reading, and cannot sing anymore,

 I just sit still and let the Lord love me."

When we come near to God, we discover He is already near to us.

We don't always know how to pray,

 and sometimes we might be asking for the wrong thing,

 but even that is better than not talking to God at all.

At least there is a chance we will hear what He is saying to us,

 if we take the time to talk with Him.

Expect God to surprise you,

 to do the unthinkable,

 to accomplish the unexpected.

AMEN